

**Weekly Report  
Special Enforcement Area  
September 18 – 24, 2003**

**Monroe County**

On September 18, Sanctuary Officer David McDaniel responded to a vessel grounding bayside of Whale Harbor. The officer discovered a Tavernier man who ran his vessel over a grass flat causing prop scars over 200 feet long. He then attempted to power off the flat, which caused a blowhole and extensive damage. The officer estimates damages could exceed \$2,000; Sanctuary biologists will assess the damages to determine any civil penalties. Later, at the Elbow SPA, he issued a citation for fishing within the SPA to a Miami man after discovering he was spear fishing. Although the man is a resident of Miami, he also maintains a home in Key Largo. At Wolf Reef, the officer encountered a local commercial crawfish fisherman and his family spear fishing from a recreational boat. The officer cited the fisherman for spear fishing in the Upper Keys and warned him for failure to possess a Florida Saltwater Fishing License and improper dive flag display.

Officer Andy Zamonis, while on water patrol on the bayside of Niles Channel, issued a citation to an Odessa man for possession of 2 undersize crawfish. At Kemp Channel during a fisheries inspection the officer issued a citation to a local man for failure to possess a Florida Salt Water Fishing License and a warning for possession of 8 undersize hogfish.

On September 20, Officer Jay Marvin responded to a citizen's report of subjects cleaning queen conch behind a residence in Plantation Key. When the officer arrived he witnessed the violation. During the investigation he discovered an active warrant on the 33 year-old Fort Lauderdale man, issued through South Carolina stemming from charges of fraud. South Carolina refused to extradite from Florida so the officer cited him for possession of 3 queen conch.

Officer Andy Zamonis, while on water patrol in Kemp Channel, issued a citation to a Sarasota man for possession of 8 undersize crawfish.

Sanctuary Officer David McDaniel issued a citation to a Tavernier man for fishing within the Molasses Reef SPA. Shortly afterward, while on patrol at Davis Reef, the officer encountered a Miami man cast netting for bait within the SPA. The fisherman possessed no permits for bait fishing within a SPA and received a citation for the violation. Continuing northward to Carysfort Reef, the officer discovered six crawfish traps in a line running from the south boundary northward directly into the SPA. An investigation of the crawfish numbers displayed on the buoys revealed an owner with three different addresses. The officer located the owner and issued him a citation for fishing within the Carysfort SPA.

On September 21, Officer Erik Steinmetz responded to a report of a boating accident with injuries where a 31' Sonic collided into the mangroves along Snake Creek. The vessel operator told the officer he was traveling approximately 45 mph when his steering failed. Two of the 9 people on board were injured and airlifted to Miami for medical

treatment. An initial estimate of damages is \$50,000 to the vessel and no consumption of alcohol was involved.

Officer Rama Shuster responded to a U. S. Coast Guard request for FWC assistance reference a report of migrants 6.5 miles off shore of Key West. The migrants were jumping off their inflatable vessel trying to avoid being taken into custody by USCG, and even threatened to harm themselves by swallowing razor blades; however, USCG eventually safely recovered all 9 migrants. Officer Shuster remained on scene while USCG unsuccessfully attempted to sink the migrant vessel.

Officers Rama Shuster, Martin Messier, and Lieutenant Roy Payne responded to a report of six subjects spear fishing and taking undersize crawfish in a residential canal of Cudjoe Gardens. Officer Shuster issued one citation to one of the visitors from North Fort Myers for failure to possess a Florida Saltwater Fishing License, and issued two warnings for possession of undersize crawfish.

Officer James Johnson responded to a report of a suicidal subject onboard a houseboat, one mile north of Sugarloaf Marina. The individual had digested an unknown number of unidentified pills. Before he arrived another boater had successfully transported the unconscious 50-year-old female to shore where medical personnel were standing by.

On September 23, Officer Erik Steinmetz conducted a fisheries inspection in Largo Sound that resulted in a citation issued to a foreign national for possession of over the bag limit and undersize snapper.

On September 24, Officer Christopher Mattson issued three citations to a group of Miami men fishing at Snake Creek Bridge. The three men were in possession of a total of 22 undersize mangrove snapper; each was cited for the violation.

During the past week, 14 members of the SOG team attended Close Quarter Combat training in Inverness. Training included AR-15 weapons familiarization and FDLE / military qualification courses. The training developed officers' skills in firing while conducting tactical and defensive maneuvers. Weapons utilized were AR-15, Glock 17, and Remington Marine Magnum Shotgun. All the officers were very impressed with the quality and demands of the training. The same 14 members will be attending Water Infiltration training at the Florida Keys Community College, Key West during this week and into next week.

Pilot John Murphy spent much of last week participating in water survival training with fellow FWC and FHP pilots at USCG Air Station, Clearwater. The training included a water pickup from Tampa Bay by a USCG Helicopter. The pilot anticipated having his aircraft back in service upon returning to SEA, but shipping delays and ongoing engine problems will further delay the aircraft's return to service.

Total documented vessel groundings for this week: 1

Total documented turtle incidents for this week: 4

## **Collier County**

On September 18, Officer Edward Romig issued citations to a Naples man in possession of undersize snook and gray snapper. The fisheries inspection occurred at the Marco Yacht Club on the south side of Jolly Bridge.

Park Officer Todd Hand responded to a report of dead sharks on the beach near Rookery Bay Study Center. He documented 12 sharks that had been dumped in a pile. There was no evidence to indicate who dumped the sharks or why they were dumped. He forwarded his report to FWC.

On September 19, Officers James Umhoefer and Edward Romig responded to a report of a diving accident with injuries. A diving party of six had been SCUBA diving 70 miles off shore, west of Naples in approximately 120 feet of water. One of the divers had been submerged for approximately 20 minutes when one of the members noticed a large black grouper float to the surface. They retrieved the grouper and became concerned for their friend who still had not surfaced. One of the friends geared up and entered the water to search for the missing diver. After 15 minutes, he consumed his air supply and surfaced to change air tanks. During his second dive he located the victim, a 23-year-old male from Fort Myers, and brought him to the surface. They started CPR and continued until they reached shore. For most of the inbound trip they were unable to communicate with anyone else due to their location 70 miles off shore. Eventually they contacted another vessel on VHF who relayed their situation to U. S. Coast Guard. Shortly after they arrived at Marco Island, the victim was pronounced dead and the second diver was air transported to a decompression chamber for treatment. Marco Island Police Department, Collier County Sheriff's Office, and U. S. Coast Guard all declined to investigate the incident. FWC conducted the initial investigation and has also notified FBI since the incident occurred in federal waters.

On September 21, Officer Arthur Matson issued a warning to a resident of Isle of Capri for dredging and depositing sand into neighboring areas. Apparently the man was dredging in order to create enough depth for his vessel to navigate at low tide. The State Warning Point was contacted.